



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
Council on Postsecondary Education  
**OFFICE OF THE POSTSECONDARY COMMISSIONER**  
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Enclosure 5b6  
April 14, 2016

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TO: Members of the Council on Postsecondary Education

FROM: Jim Purcell, Ed.D, Commissioner for Postsecondary Education

DATE: April 4, 2016

RE: Proposal from Rhode Island College to change the name of the RI  
STEM Center to the RI STEAM Center

### **Background**

Rhode Island College is requesting approval to change the name of the RI STEM Center to the RI STEAM Center. STEAM education adds arts and design (A) to the traditional science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. The inclusion of arts and design within STEM represents a more holistic view of exploration and discovery and acknowledges the important role that design thinking and creativity play in innovative solutions to problems and in the development of new ideas.

### **Rationale**

RIC states that STEAM education combines the free-thinking and flexible processes of creativity with the structural frameworks of critical thinking. Since RISD heavily promoted the concept of STEAM education a few years ago, Rhode Island has capitalized on this. The Rhode Island STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and design, mathematics) Now Coalition is a broad alliance of nearly 250 individuals from across the state representing business, education, and government, organized and coordinated by the Rhode Island STEM Center at Rhode Island College. This coalition is working to increase the number of students who pursue degrees and careers in STEAM and to increase STEAM literacy for all students regardless of career paths.

The name change from the RI STEM Center to the RI STEAM Center will be more closely aligned and branded with the Rhode Island STEAM Now Coalition allowing for greater promotion of integrated STEAM programs. The change will also provide the Center the opportunity to build on past success and establish itself as an organization that develops STEAM within a context of research, quality and sustainability.

RIC asserts that STEAM education is gaining traction in many institutions of higher education including at Drexel University, University of Florida, and Northwestern University. Members of the Rhode Island STEAM Now Coalition that are related to higher education include:

- Brown University
- The College & University Research Collaborative (The Collaborative)
- Community College of Rhode Island
- The Guiding Education in Math and Science Network (GEMS-Net)- a partnership of URI's School of Education, scientists and engineers, and public school districts.
- Naval War College
- New England Board of Higher Education
- New England Institute of Technology
- National Science Foundation's Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR)
- Providence College
- Rhode Island School of Design
- Roger Williams University
- University of Rhode Island

The many Rhode Island businesses and trade associations that are part of the Rhode Island STEAM Now Coalition indicate that this concept is considered important by employers, as well as educators. Business/industry members of the Coalition include:

- Atrion Networking Corporation
- Bridge Technical Talent
- Commerce RI
- Dassault Systemes Simulia
- General Dynamic Electric Boat
- Governor's Workforce Board
- Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce
- Guill Tool & Engineering
- KMRM, LLC
- McLaughlin Research
- Newport County Mentor Co-Op Group
- Prometheus, Inc.
- RI Department of Labor & Training
- RI Manufacturers Association
- RI Marine Trades Association
- Southeastern new England Defense Industry Alliance (SENEDIA)
- STEAM Engine/Fourth Economy
- Tech Collective
- TEDCO, Inc.
- TinkerBristol

### **Institutional Role**

The Rhode Island College mission includes preparing students in a number of undergraduate and graduate programs in the arts and sciences and in professional fields such as education. The college is further meeting its mission by offering programs designed to meet the economic development and workforce needs of the state.

**Financial Viability**

There are no costs associated with this request since it does not entail the hiring of faculty and staff, or require any additional resources.

**RIOPC Review**

RIOPC staff reviewed the information on the proposed name change from the RI STEM Center to the RI STEAM Center. The change presented is within the mission, role and scope of Rhode Island College and does not require Council approval.